

A
SHORT NOTE ON THE LIFE OF
MOHAMMED, THE PROPHET
OF ARABIA.

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FORE-WORD

India rightly occupies a place of pre-eminence among the ancient countries of the World. This distinction is not, however the result of the choice gifts, which a bounteous nature has most lavishly showered upon her, nor is it merely due to the culture and civilization, advancement in learning arts, and letters in which she has not been surpassed by any other nation. It is based chiefly on the fact that she has been a fountain of spritual inspiration, a cradle of religious beliefs and a seeker after divine truth.

It is this spark of spritual fervour kept aglow by the personal devotion and noble life of her numerous 'Rishees' and sages that has sustained and warmed her soul in moments of her trial and has given her strength to resist the dangerous assaults of ignoble materialism, insinuating charms of godless communism and soul-killing effects of aggressive national-socialism. Religious instincts and spritual tendencies which are a dominating factor of her social outlook and pervade the thoughts and ideas of her people have always stood the Indians in good stead in preserving their national traditions and cultural peculiarities from the effects of external ideas and in proving the supremacy of their civilisation, if not of their arms upon the people of the world.

But what an undignified site to find a country steeped in the traditions of religiosity in the throes of degrading communal bitterness and sectarian warfare there is no wonder if historian of our country dealing with the events of the last two decades of the century finds his hands trembling and tears falling down his eyes at the mighty fall of our respected and reputed motherland from the high position she had attained and reduced so low in the estimation of civilised nations due to the fault of her own children who are rushing at one another's throat in the name of religion.

In the midst of such an ugly scene of vendetta among communal gladiators, it is however, most gratifying to come across sincere efforts at restoring communal peace and good will by understanding correctly the fundamental truth of every religion professed in the country. Pandit Gopi Nath Joshi has made a notable contribution towards this by publishing monograph on the life and teachings of the prophets and religious heroes of the world. The present monograph on the life of the holy prophet of Islam (Peace be On him) written in a very readable style and with perfect justice and impartiality is a most laudable and opportune publication. Pandit ji deserves great felicitations and encouragement from all quarters and it is hoped such publications will be forthcoming by the followers of different religions for the common benefit of the people of India. That Pandit ji is a product of Jaipur which is well known for preserving

the traditions of broad minded toleration and communal justice is a fact of which every one of us should be proud. May he live long to benifit his countrymen by his literary efforts.

Dated 5th May 1937.

Md., Amir Uddin Khan,
Secretary Islami Panchayat,
JAIPUR

A SHORT NOTE ON THE LIFE OF MOHAMMED THE GREATEST AND THE LAST PROPHET OF ARABIA.

Mohammed, the great founder of the faith of Islam, was born in Mecca, in April, in the year 569 of the Christian era (Some historians say that he was born in 571 while others maintain that he was born in 570.)

He belonged to the valiant and illustrious tribe of Korish (قریش). Hashem (هاشم) the, progenitor of Mohammed was a great benefactor of Mecca and the guardian of the holy Caaba, the great shrine of Arabian pilgrimage and worship. Abdul Motaleb (عبدالمطلب) was the son of Hashem (هاشم). The signal services rendered by father and son to deliver the holy city from an invading army sent by the Christian princes of Abyssinia, confirmed the guardianship of the Caaba in the line of Hashem.

Abdul Motaleb had several sons and daughters. Those of his sons who figure in history were, Abu Taleb (ابوطالب) Abu Lahab, (ابولهب) Abbas (عباس) Hamza (حمزة) and Abdullah (عبدالله). The last named was the youngest and best beloved. He was remarkable for

personal beauty. He married Amina (أمينة), a maiden of a distant branch of the same illustrious stock of Korish.

Mohammed was the first and only fruit of this marriage. His mother's brother, an astrologer, cast his nativity, and predicted that he would rise to vast power, found an empire, and establish a new faith among men.

Mohammed's father died six months before he was born leaving him no other inheritance than 5 camels, a few sheep, and a female slave of Ethiopia, named Barakat (بركت). His mother, Amina had hitherto nurtured him, but care and sorrow dried the fountains of her breast and she sought a nurse for him. Halema (حليمة) the wife of a shepherd took the child out of Mecca to foster him.

While the child remained under her roof, every thing around her prospered. Her pastures were always green, her flocks and herds increased tenfold, her field yielded abundant crops and peace prevailed in her dwelling. Bodily and mental powers were manifested by this wonderful child at a very early age. He could stand alone when three months old, run abroad when he was seven, and at eight he could speak so as to be understood and in the course of another month he could converse with fluency, displaying a wisdom astonishing to all who heard him. It was only for a few years that he remained under the care of this nurse. She carried him back to Mecca, and delivered him to his mother Amina.

He remained with his mother until his sixth year, when she took him with her to Medina, on a visit to her relations there, but on her journey homewards she died, and was buried at Abwa, (أبوا) a village between Medina and Mecca. Her grave was a place of pious resort and tender recollection to her son, at the latest period of his life. The faithful Abyssinian slave (باركات, Barakat now acted as a mother to the orphan child and conducted him to his grandfather Abdul Motaleb, in whose household he remained for two years treated with care and tenderness. At the time of his death the grandfather called to him his eldest son Abu-Taleb and bequeathed Mohammed to his especial protection. The good Abu-Taleb took his nephew to his bosom, and ever afterwards was to him as a parent. As Abu-Taleb succeeded to the guardianship of the Caaba at the death of his father, Mohammed continued for several years in a kind of sacerdotal household, where the rites and ceremonies of the sacred house were rigidly observed.

Mohammed was now twelve years of age, but he had an intelligence far beyond his years. The spirit of inquiry was awake within him and his uncle took him with him on the journey to Syria. The caravan arrived at Basra inhabited by Christians. One of the Christian monks conversed with Mohammed and was surprised at the precocity of his intellect and interested by his eager desire for information as to matters of religion. Mohammed returned to Mecca.

Mohammed was now completely launched in active

life, accompanying his uncles in various expeditions. When he was sixteen years of age he went with his uncle Zobier (زبير) to Yemen (اليمن). As Mohammed advanced in years he was entrusted by different persons with the responsibility of conducting their business affairs in caravan journeys to Syria, Yemen, and elsewhere; all which tended to enlarge the sphere of his observation and to give him a quick insight into character and a knowledge of human affairs.

There was at this time residing in Mecca a widow named Khadijah (خديجة) of the tribe of Korish. She had been twice married. Her last husband, a wealthy merchant, had recently died, and the extensive concerns of the house were in need of a conductor. A nephew of the widow had become acquainted with Mohammed in the course of his commercial expeditions, and had noticed the ability and integrity with which he acquitted himself on all occasions. He pointed him out to his aunt as a person very qualified to be her factor. The personal appearance of Mohammed may have strongly seconded this recommendation, for he was now about twenty-five years of age, and extolled by Arabian writers for his manly beauty and engaging manners. So desirous was Khadijah of securing his services that she offered him double wages to conduct a caravan which she was on the point of sending off to Syria. Mohammed consulted his uncle Abu Taleb, and by his advice accepted the offer. She afterwards sent him to the southern parts of Arabia on similar expeditions. In all the business Khadijah was

so highly satisfied with the way in which he discharged his duties that on his return she paid him double the amount of his stipulated wages.

Khadijah was now in her fortieth year, a woman of judgment and experience. The mental qualities of Mohammed rose more and more in her estimation and her heart began to yearn toward the fresh and comely youth. The widow was filled with a lively faith in the super-human merits of her youthful steward and commissioned her trusty slave, Maisara ميسرة to offer him her hand. At last the marriage was formally concluded. Great rejoicing was made. Halema, the nurse of Mohammed was summoned to rejoice at his nuptials and was presented with a flock of forty sheep, with which she returned enriched and contented, to her native village.

The marriage with Khadejah placed Mohammed among the most wealthy of his native city. His moral worth also gave him great influence in the community. Allah, says the historian Abulfeda, (ابوالغدا) had endowed him with every gift necessary to accomplish and adorn an honest man; he was so pure and sincere, so free from evil thought, that he was commonly known by the name of Al-Amen, (الامين) The Honest or The Faithful or The Trusty. The great confidence reposed in his judgment and probity caused him to be frequently referred to as arbiter in disputes between his townsmen.

Four daughters and one son were the fruit of the marriage with Khadejah. The son whose name was

Qasim (قاسم) died in his infancy. For several years after his marriage he continued in commerce, visiting the great Arabian fairs and making distant journeys with the caravans. The wealth had raised him above the necessity of toiling for subsistence, and given him leisure to indulge the original bias of his mind: a turn for reverie and religious meditation, which he had evinced from his earliest years.

Mohammed became more and more sensible of the gross idolatry and national vices prevalent in his country in proportion as his intelligent mind contrasted them with the spiritual religions which had been the subjects of his inquiries. Various passages in the Koran show the ruling idea which gradually sprang up in his mind, until it engrossed his thoughts and influenced all his actions. That idea was a religious reform. It had become his fixed belief, deducted from all that he had learnt and meditated that the only true religion had been revealed to Adam. That religion inculcated the direct and spiritual worship of one true and only God, the Creator of the universe. This idea so much engrossed his mind that he longed for making a reform in the prevalent religion of blind idolatry. He began to meditate and fall into reveries and absented himself from society and sought the solitude of a cavern on mount Hara, ^{هارة} about three leagues north of Mecca where he would remain days and nights together, engaged in prayer and meditation. He often became subject to dreams, to ecstasies and trances. Often he would lose all consciousness of

surrounding objects and lie upon the ground lost in meditation. Khadijah who beheld these trances entreated to know the cause but he evaded her inquiries. These trances were the workings of prophecy; the intimations of the Most High began to dawn on his spirit; and his mind laboured with conceptions too great for mortal thought. At length what had been shadowed out in dreams, was made apparent and distinct by an angelic apparition and a divine annunciation.

It was in the fortieth year of his age when this famous revelation took place. As Mohammed in the silent night lay wrapped in his mantle, he heard a voice calling upon him; uncovering his head, a flood of light broke upon him of such intolerable splendour, that he swooned away. On regaining his senses, he beheld an angel in a human form, which approaching from a distance, displayed a silken cloth, covered with written characters. "Read", said the angel "I know not how to read!" replied Mohammed, "Read!" repeated the angel, "in the name of thy Lord, who has created all things. Read in the name of the most High, who taught man the use of the pen; who sheds on his soul the ray of knowledge, and teaches him what before he knew not."

Upon this Mohammed instantly felt his understanding illumined with celestial light, and read what was written on the cloth, which contained the decrees of God, as afterwards promulgated in the Koran. When he had finished the perusal, the heavenly messenger announced, "Oh Mohammed, of a verity, thou art the prophet of God! and I am his angel Gabriel." (جبریل)

Mohammed came trembling and agitated to Khadejah in the morning and told her what happened at night. "Joyful tidings dost thou bring!" exclaimed she. "By him, in whose hand is the soul of Khadejah, I will henceforth regard thee as the prophet of our nation. Rejoice, Allah will not suffer thee to fall to shame, because thou hast been loving to thy kinsfolk, kind to thy neighbour, charitable to the poor, hospitable to the stranger, faithful to thy word and ever a defender of the truth."

Khadijah hastened to communicate what she had heard to her cousin Waraka. He exclaimed, "Thou speakest true, oh Khadijah! The angel who has appeared to thy husband is the same who in the days of old, was sent to Moses, the son of Amram. His annunciation is true. Thy husband is indeed a prophet!"

For a time Mohammed confided his revelations merely to his own household. The early steps of Mohammed in his prophetic career were perilous and doubtful. He had hostility to apprehend on every side. Under adverse circumstances the new faith was propagated secretly and slowly in so much that for the first three years the number of converts did not exceed forty. But in spite of all opposition raised against him he continued to announce at full length his revelations received from heaven. Once while he was preaching to a large assembly of men and asked them to stand by him, none of them gave response to his demand except Ali, the son of Abu-Taleb, who offered himself to the services of the prophet. Mohammed threw his arms round the generous youth and pressed him to his bosom.

Though the doctrines of Mohammed were thus ungraciously received by his kindreds and friends, they found favour, among the people at large. Mohammed now threw off all reserve and was inspired with increasing enthusiasm and went about openly and earnestly proclaiming his doctrines and giving himself out as a prophet.

Mohammed did not profess to set up a new religion, but to restore that derived in the earliest times from God himself. The Koran which is the great book of his faith was given not as his own work but as a divine revelation, as the very words of God and therefore it is called Kalamullah. Mohammed was the last, as he was the greatest, of the line of prophets sent to make known the will of God. The unity of God is the corner stone of this reformed religion. 'There is no God but God' was its leading dogma. To this leading dogma was added, "Mohammed is the prophet of God."

The translation of a few verses revealed is given below:—

Frequent almsgiving was enjoined as an imperative duty; and the immutable law of right and wrong, "Do unto another as thou wouldst he should do unto thee," was given for the moral conduct of the faithful.

"Deal not unjustly with others," says the Koran, "and ye shall not be dealt with unjustly."

Mohammed inculcated a noble fairness and sin-

cerity in dealing. Mohammed exhorts the merchants to purify their traffic with alms.

“Feed the hungry; visit the sick; and free the captive if confined unjustly. Look not scornfully upon thy fellow man; neither walk the earth with insolence; for God loveth not the arrogant and vainglorious. Be moderate in thy pace, and speak with a moderate tone.” Mohammed was strenuous in enforcing the importance of efficacy of prayer.

Mohammed preached and prayed in the pulpit, some times sitting, some times standing and leaning on a staff. His precepts mainly inculcate devotion to God and humanity to man. “He who is not affectionate to God’s creatures and to his own children,” said he, “God will not be affectionate to him. Every moslim who clothes the naked of his faith, will be clothed by Allah in the green robes of paradise.”

In one of his sermons is the following, apologue on the subject of charity. The angels asked, “Oh God, is there anything of the creation stronger than the mountains?” And God replied, “Iron is stronger than the mountains.” “And is there anything stronger than Iron.” “Yes, fire is stronger than iron.” “Is there anything stronger than fire?” “Yes, water, for it quenches fire.” Is there anything stronger than water? “Yes, wind.” “Is there anything stronger than wind?” “Yes, a good man giving alms; if he give with his right hand and conceal it from his left, he overcomes all things.”

His definition of charity embraced the wide circle of kindness. Every good act, he would say, is charity; exhortation of your fellowmen to virtuous deeds is equally a virtue; your putting a wanderer in the right road is charity; your assisting the blind is charity; your removing stones and thorns and other obstructions from the road is charity; your giving water to the thirsty is charity.

A man's true wealth hereafter is the good he does in this world to his fellow man. When he dies, people will say, "What property has he left behind him?" But the angels, who examine him in the grave will ask, "What good deeds hast thou sent before thee?"

Charity of the tongue, also, that most important and best cultivated of charities, was likewise earnestly inculcated by Mohammed.

Abu Jaraiya, an inhabitant of Basrah, coming to Medina, and being persuaded of the apostolical office of Mohammed, entreated of him some great rule of conduct. "Speak evil of no one," answered the prophet. "From that time," says Abu Jaraiya, "I never did abuse any one, whether free-man or slave."

The rules of Islamism extended to the courtesies of life. Make a salam (or salutation) to a house on entering and leaving it. Return the salute of friends and acquaintances, and wayfarers on the road. He who rides must be the first to make the salute to him who

walks : he who walks to him who is sitting : a small party to a large party, and the young to the old.

“Oh, Omar,” said he one day, “the best of man’s treasure is a virtuous woman, who acts by God’s orders, and is obedient and pleasing to her husband ; he regards her personal and mental beauties with delight ; when he orders her to do anything, she obeys him ; and when he is absent, she guards his right in property and honour.”

THE FLIGHT OF THE PROPHET.

Abu Sofian, the governor of Mecca, was Mohammed’s implacable foe. Abu Jahl was another bitter enemy. His death was contemplated. He was informed of the impending danger. He made his escape to Medina on July 16th, 622. This escape is called the memorable Hegira, or Flight of the prophet, the epoch from which the Mohamedans compute their time. He was born at Mecca and died at Medina.

Fatima, the wife of Ali was the only daughter that survived Mohammed. The death of the Prophet took place on his birthday, when he had completed his 63rd year. It was in the eleventh year of Hegira, and the 632nd year of the christian era, that the prophet left this world and returned to God whose messenger he was.

The religion of Islam is divided into two parts—Faith and Practice. Faith is distributed under six

different heads. or articles, viz: 1st, faith in God ; 2nd, in his angels; 3rd, in his Scriptures or divine books; 4th, in his prophets; 5th, in the resurrection and final judgment 6th, in predestination.

The articles of religious practice are four-fold : Prayer, including ablution, Alms or charity, Fasting, Pilgrimage.

SOME OF THE FEATURES OF THE CHARACTER OF THE PROPHET.

There was everything charming about his person. He had a prepossessing appearance. His deportment was calm and equable; he sometimes indulged in pleasantries, but more commonly was grave and dignified though he is said to have possessed a smile of captivating sweetness. His complexion was more ruddy than is usual with Arabs and in his enthusiastic moments there was a glow and radiance in his countenance, which was considered as the supernatural light of prophecy.

His intellectual qualities were of an extraordinary kind. His ordinary discourse was grave, sententious, was often eloquent, and his eloquence was aided by a voice musical and sonorous.

He was sober and abstemious in his diet, and a rigorous observer of fasts. He indulged in no magnificence of apparel, the ostentation of a petty mind; neither was his simplicity in dress affected but the result of a

real disregard to distinction from so trivial a source. His garments were sometimes of wool; sometimes of the cotton of Yemen; and were often patched. He wore a turban, for he said turbans were worn by the angels. He forbade also red clothes and the use of gold rings for males. He wore a seal ring of silver, the engraved part under his finger close to the palm of his hand, bearing the inscription, "Mohammed the messenger of God." He was scrupulous as to personal cleanliness, and observed frequent ablutions.

In his private dealings he was just. He treated friends and strangers, the rich and the poor, the powerful and the weak, with equity, and was beloved by the common people for affability with which he received them, and listened to their complaints.

In domestic life he was kind and tolerant. "I served him from the time I was eight years old," said his servant Anas, "and he never scolded me for any thing, though things were spoiled by me."

His military triumphs awakend no pride or vain-glory, as they would have done had they been effected for selfish purposes. In the time of his greatest power he maintained the same simplicity of manners and appearance as in the days of his adversity. So far from affecting regal state, he was displeased if, on entering a room, unusual testimonial of respect were shown him. If he aimed at universal dominion, it was the dominion

of the faith; as to the temporal rule which grew up in his hands, as he used it without ostentation, so he took no step to perpetuate it in his family.

The riches were poured in upon him from tribute and the spoils of war were expended in promoting the victories of the faith, and in relieving the poor among its votaries, in so much that his treasury was often drained of its last coin. Omar Ibn Al Hareth declares that Mohammed at his death, did not leave a golden dinar nor a silver dirhem, a slave nor a slave-girl, nor anything but his grey mule Duldul, his arms, and the ground, which he bestowed upon his wives, his children, and the poor. "Allah," says an Arabian writer, "offered him the keys of all the treasures of the earth, but he refused to accept them."

It is this perfect abnegation of self, connected with his heartfelt piety which runs throughout the various phases of his fortune and leads any one to form a just estimate of Mohammed's character. Prayer, that vital duty of Islamism; and that infallible purifier of the soul, was his constant practice. "Trust in God" was his comfort and support in times of trial and despondency. On the clemency of God, we are told, he reposed all his hopes of supernal happiness. Ayesha relates that on one occasion she inquired of him, "Oh, prophet, do none enter paradise but through God's mercy". "None, none, none!" replied he, with earnest and emphatic repetition, "But you, oh prophet, will not you enter excepting

through his compassion ?” Then Mohammed put his hand upon his head, and replied three times, with great solemnity, “Neither shall I enter paradise unless God cover me with his mercy !”

THE RESULT OF THE PROPHEET'S WORK CONSIDERED IN A MATERIAL POINT OF VIEW.

The blind and misguided faith in gross idolatry and superstition, the widespread ignorance and vice of the people which made their lives low and miserable, gave way under the sway of a much purer, nobler and loftier religion which shed a lustre all around and gave birth to a moral and spiritual strength in the character of the people which assumed a definite shape. In place of their mutual bitter feelings, feuds, discords and quarrels were substituted the good feelings of brotherly love, peace and harmony and thus the jarring elements of the several tribes were united into one compact body and being thus united in one creed and animated by one common cause, they formed a great and strong nation. When we consider that the scattered and conflicting tribes of Arabia were thus bound up into a solid nation by a brotherhood of faith and when we think of the miraculous success that Mohammed could achieve in his apostolic mission in so short a time, we cannot help concluding that it was the most wonderful moral force

and that it was a marvellous spiritual influence that wrought an almost universal change in the character of the people in so tangible a form. To change the direction of the varying currents of human thought into one opposite channel is a work wholly superhuman and remarkably distinguishes the character of Mohammed as a true prophet who undoubtedly acted under a supernatural divine influence by which he was qualified to communicate the moral and religious truths with authority. The religious fervour and zeal which the new faith infused into the life of the Arabs roused their dormant energies to the utmost and on this inspiration of new life and the national unity was laid the foundation of the power which was to attain stupendous strength to shake the mightiest empires of the world and to establish the Mohammedan sovereignty as far as Spain on the West and China on the East.

RESULT OF THE PROPHET'S WORK CONSIDERED IN A SPIRITUAL POINT OF VIEW.

Though Mohammed was born of humble parents he lived not for the acquisition of wealth, power and rank, the low objects of a petty mind. Spirituality rather than materiality was the guiding principle of his life. The constant enjoyment of one true God rather than that of the world was the end of his life. He had from his very birth a very strong religious turn of mind. He was a prophet not made by any influence of his surround-

ing circumstances but he was a born prophet. :He was great morally, he was great intellectually, but he was far greater spiritually. He was endowed with excellent power of both heart and mind. He greatly felt for the reformation of the people from the ignorance, blind faith and vice that then prevailed and knew how to establish in their stead the rule of knowledge, enlightenment and virtue, As a born prophet he must have performed many miracles to convince the misguided ignorant people of the truth of the Divine revelations which he was favoured to have from time to time. But two of them do still exist and they are the best and the greatest everlasting miracles. One of them is the production of the Koran. Unlettered though he was, the whole Koran from beginning to end exhibits so much beauty, elegance and sublimity of style and composition that the great attempts of even the most learned writers of Arabia to equal any of the verses have since been baffled. Great was his devotion to God and deeply imbued was he with His love. Sometimes the natural impulses of burning love became so much predominant and took so much possession of his mind that he lost his consciousness of this gross world and regained the pristine purity of the soul and it was during this realisation of God within him that the spiritual truths that lay imbedded or dormant in his soul began to dawn upon his mind and he, as it were, began to communicate with God. These divine revelations or communions are the verses of the Holy Koran. The prophet says, "He who realises his soul realises his God." (من عرف نفسه فقد عرف ربه)

These verses are the inestimable wealth that he has bequeathed to all his followers who believe in him. In addition to this visible wealth in the Holy book he has left an invisible wealth of spiritual love and purity which has since been coming down through Hazrat Ali from heart to heart. He made Ali his first disciple and lit the fire of supreme devotional love to God in his heart in a manner that it might be transmitted from heart to heart and though nearly fourteen hundred years have elapsed since the first communication of that love, yet its currents have been unceasingly flowing down to our times. And this is his second great miracle. This wealth is to be got only by the few chosen who are qualified to receive it. This invisible spiritual wealth is the wealth of those who renounce the world and prepare themselves for the next world. These men are the Derweshes and Sufis that are found even to this day in every part of India and elsewhere. When we happen to come in contact with any of these Sufis (if he be real) and fall under his blessed influence, we notice the wonderful power that he is possessed of and we witness the wonders that he can work. When such is the power of an ordinary real Sufi, what to speak of the power of the Prophet who was the fountain-head whence the powers of all the real faquirs have emanated. When we are unable to understand the real workings of the minds of these petty Sufis, how can a mortal earthly-minded man pretend to comprehend all the workings of the mighty master-mind who was destined to wield the

destinies of so many millions of men and women of the Islamic world. He was a wonderful being. What is said and can be said of him is but a faint representation of what he really was. This can at least be said that sometime he was one with God. All Mohammedans should be proud of their Prophet and should strictly follow the doctrines preached and promulgated by the Greatest as well as the 1st Prophet of Arabia some 13 or 14 centuries ago for regeneration.



